

Environmental Health and Safety Specialist — Kansas City

Job Definition

Environmental health and safety specialists are responsible for developing, implementing and monitoring industrial safety programs for the organization. They inspect plant areas to ensure compliance with Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations. OSHA is a department within the U. S. Department of Labor charged with ensuring the health and safety of America's workers by setting and enforcing standards; providing training, outreach, and education; establishing partnerships; and encouraging continuous improvement in workplace safety and health. Safety specialists evaluate new equipment and raw materials for safety and monitor employee exposure to chemicals and other toxic substances. Depending on the job level, safety specialists also may conduct training programs in hazardous waste collection, disposal and radiation safety regulations.

Life Skills

To be an environmental health and safety specialist, you should:

- be reliable, responsible and dependable
- have patience and good communication skills
- be able to work as part of a team
- be able to pay close attention to detail
- be able to relate well to employees of all ages and backgrounds
- be able to remain calm under pressure
- have problem-solving skills

Work Environment

Environmental health and safety specialists work in a variety of settings, including the following.

- community health clinics
- corporations with laboratory environments
- hospitals
- manufacturing plants
- other companies (pharmaceutical, medical technology, biotech and others)
- research facilities

Tasks

- develop, implement and monitor industrial safety programs
- maintain knowledge of OSHA regulations
- perform inspections to ensure compliance with OSHA regulations
- identify and correct hazardous working situations
- evaluate equipment and materials for safety
- monitor chemical and/or toxic material exposure to employees
- provide safety training to employees

Working Hours

- Environmental health and safety specialists can work days, evenings or nights.
- Shifts often may be long or irregular.

Income Potential

Hourly Wage		Annual Salary	
Entry:	\$15.38	Entry:	\$32,000
Mean:	\$19.71	Mean:	\$41,000
Experienced:	\$24.04	Experienced:	\$50,000

Education and Training

An entry-level environmental health and safety specialist job requires a bachelor's degree or equivalent and zero to two years of related experience. Certification is available through several organizations, and continuing education often is required for recertification.

Environmental Services Worker — Kansas City

Job Definition

Environmental services workers clean and sanitize health centers to create a pleasant atmosphere and to prevent the spread of disease. Environmental services workers clean patients' rooms, restrooms and work spaces throughout the health center. They also maintain floors and corridors.

Life Skills

To be an environmental services worker, you should:

- have compassion and a desire to help people
- report to work on time
- be dependable and hard working
- be able to work as part of a team
- be able to follow orders from supervisors
- have physical and mental stamina
- be able to relate to patients and their families

Work Environment

Environmental services workers work in a variety of settings, including the following.

- hospitals
- nursing and personal care facilities

Tasks

- keep buildings and rooms clean and in good condition
- clean floors, shampoo rugs, clean bathrooms, clean patient rooms, clean offices and multipurpose rooms
- manage time effectively
- be courteous to patients while working in their rooms
- follow safety and health regulation procedures
- maintain safety of others while working in common areas and patient rooms
- disinfect, sterilize and maintain equipment
- use equipment, supplies and cleaners properly
- handle hazardous waste properly
- dispose of waste in trash receptacles
- perform routine maintenance activities
- perform meeting setups, as requested
- notify management of need for repairs

Working Hours

- Environmental services workers can work days, evenings or nights.
- A shift is typically four to eight hours.
- Some work part time or weekends only.

Income Potential

Hourly Wage		Annual Salary	
Entry:	\$6.78	Entry:	\$14,104
Mean:	\$9.75	Mean:	\$20,271
Experienced:	\$11.23	Experienced:	\$23,355

Education and Training

A high school diploma and vocational training in janitorial maintenance is preferred for environmental service workers. Training may be included on the job. Supervisory positions may require certification or special continuing education courses.

Healthcare Food Service Worker — Kansas City

Job Definition

Healthcare food service workers provide meals and a pleasant atmosphere for patients, employees and visitors in health centers. Their duties involve preparing and serving meals and cleaning dishes and equipment.

Life Skills

To be a healthcare food service worker, you should:

- have compassion and a desire to help people
- report to work on time
- be dependable and hard working
- be able to work as part of a team
- be able to follow orders from supervisors
- have physical and mental stamina
- be able to relate to patients and their families

Work Environment

Healthcare food service workers work in a variety of settings, including the following.

- hospitals
- nursing and personal care facilities

Tasks

- assemble food trays
- deliver trays to patient rooms
- retrieve trays from patient rooms and transport to dish room
- demonstrate proper hand washing
- follow safety and health regulation procedures
- use equipment and chemicals safely
- inspect and report defective equipment
- identify infection control concerns
- clean and sanitize equipment
- offer assistance to patients when delivering trays
- wash and sanitize dishes
- clean tables and floors in cafeteria
- stock cafeteria supplies and food items
- deliver food stock to hospital units
- read and understand menu requests
- identify diet guidelines for children and adults
- direct appropriate diet-related concerns or questions to a dietician or nurse

Working Hours

- Healthcare food service workers can work days, evenings or nights.
- A shift is typically four to eight hours.
- Some work part time or weekends only.

Income Potential

Hourly Wage		Annual Salary	
Entry:	\$6.32	Entry:	\$13,145
Mean:	\$7.99	Mean:	\$16,610
Experienced:	\$8.82	Experienced:	\$18,343

Education and Training

No formal education is required for healthcare food service workers, but a high school diploma is preferred. Training is usually on the job. Supervisory positions may require certification or special continuing education courses.

Laboratory Assistant — Kansas City

Job Definition

Laboratory assistants, also known as medical technicians, use the principles and theories of science and mathematics to solve problems in research and development and to help invent and improve products and processes. However, their jobs are more practically oriented than those of scientists. Assistants set up, operate and maintain laboratory instruments; monitor experiments; make observations; calculate and record results; and often develop conclusions. They must keep detailed logs of all work-related activities.

Life Skills

To be a laboratory assistant, you should:

- be reliable, responsible and dependable
- have patience and good communication skills
- be adaptable and flexible
- be able to pay close attention to detail
- have problem-solving skills
- have an interest in science and math
- possess time management and organizational skills
- possess good motor skills and eye-hand coordination

Work Environment

Laboratory assistants work in a variety of settings, including the following.

- community health clinics
- hospitals
- research facilities

Tasks

- assist in the development and revision of laboratory procedures
- use computers and laboratory equipment
- set up and clean laboratory equipment
- conduct tests and experiments
- troubleshoot laboratory equipment and operating errors
- ensure proper labeling, preparation, transportation and storage of specimens
- maintain laboratory equipment and inventory levels of laboratory supplies
- perform blood draw procedures in hospitals, as appropriate
- obtain and prepare specimens for examination in hospitals, as appropriate

Working Hours

- Laboratory assistants can work days, evenings or nights.
- Shifts may be irregular to monitor experiments that cannot be completed during regular working hours.
- Some work part time or weekends only.

Income Potential

Hourly Wage		Annual Salary	
Entry:	\$11.54	Entry:	\$24,000
Mean:	\$13.70	Mean:	\$28,500
Experienced:	\$15.87	Experienced:	\$33,000

Education and Training

Most laboratory assistant positions are filled by individuals with either a high school diploma, a biotechnology certificate, an associate's degree or equivalent experience with a scientific background.

Licensed Practical Nurse — Kansas City

Job Definition

Licensed practical nurses (LPN) provide bedside care to patients and perform a variety of other nursing duties. Under direct supervision of registered nurses and physicians, LPNs take vital signs, observe patients and ensure their comfort, collect specimens for laboratory tests, administer medications, dress wounds, start IVs and, in some cases, supervise nursing aides or assistants.

Life Skills

To be a licensed practical nurse, you should:

- have compassion and a desire to help people
- have a caring, sympathetic nature
- be reliable, responsible and dependable
- have patience and good communication skills
- be able to work as part of a team
- be able to follow orders from supervisors and physicians
- have physical and mental stamina
- be able to relate to patients and their families
- have an interest in science and math
- be comfortable in teaching and supervising roles
- have keen observational and decision-making skills

Work Environment

Nursing and personal care facilities offer the most new jobs for licensed practical nurses. Work settings include the following.

- community health clinics
- doctors' offices and clinics
- home care, including private duty
- hospice
- hospitals
- nursing and personal care facilities
- outpatient facilities and surgery centers
- psychiatric and rehabilitation centers
- public health agencies

Tasks

- assist patients with basic nursing care
- monitor patients' overall well-being
- evaluate patients' conditions, problems and deviations from normal
- develop patient care plans according to patients' needs
- communicate with and ensure participation from patients, families and significant others in the plan of care, using teaching techniques
- communicate patients' status and issues with all team members, including physicians, physical therapists, nutritionists, social workers and respiratory therapists, among others
- follow physician orders precisely
- document patients' medical information and vital signs
- administer medications. Some LPNs are certified to start IVs.
- perform or assist in bedside or other clinical area procedures
- interpret tests and laboratory results
- supervise nursing assistants or supervise a particular nursing unit
- complete and maintain annual mandatory education requirements and certifications

Working Hours

- Licensed practical nurses work days, evenings or nights.
- A shift is typically eight to 12 hours.
- Some work 36 hours in three days or 40 hours in four days and are off duty three to four days.
- Some work part time or weekends only.

Income Potential

Hourly Wage		Annual Salary	
Entry:	\$12.10	Entry:	\$25,174
Mean:	\$15.04	Mean:	\$31,287
Experienced:	\$16.51	Experienced:	\$34,343

Education and Training

Entrance to licensed practical nurse educational programs may require a high school diploma or its equivalent, although a diploma is strongly recommended. Most are offered through vocational-technical schools and community or junior colleges. After a one-year educational program, graduates must pass the N-CLEX-PN examination.

Medical Coding Specialist — Kansas City

Job Definition

Medical coding specialists assign codes to diagnoses and procedures to ensure proper financial payments from insurance companies and government agencies. Medical coding specialists convert doctors' bills, services and prescriptions into alpha-numeric codes that can be stored electronically. There are two types of medical coding specialists. Clinical coding specialists (CCS) typically work in hospitals and primarily use the International Classification of Diseases, 9th Revision (ICD-9) coding system. Clinical coding specialists-physician (CCS-P) typically work in doctors' offices, group practices or multispecialty clinics and use current procedural terminology (CPT) codes. Medical coding specialists can become certified in either of the two specialties.

Life Skills

To be a medical coding specialist, you should:

- be reliable, responsible and dependable
- have patience and good communication skills
- be able to pay close attention to detail
- be able to work independently
- have problem-solving skills
- possess time management and organizational skills

Work Environment

Medical coding specialists work in a variety of settings, including the following.

- doctors' offices and clinics
- home health care services
- home-based business
- hospitals
- multispecialty clinics
- nursing and personal care facilities
- outpatient facilities and surgery centers
- public health agencies

Tasks

- compile and record medical charts, reports and correspondence
- review medical record content and assign accurate diagnostic codes and procedure codes, in accordance with ICD-9 guidelines
- possess knowledge of medical terminology and disease processes
- use classification manuals
- use computer to enter data
- organize and evaluate records for accuracy
- monitor inpatient and outpatient accounts receivable reports to ensure timely coding and billing practices
- communicate with physicians and other staff regarding questions related to coding issues
- notify department management of problems in a timely manner
- perform audits of abstracted data to ensure accuracy and consistency among coding staff and the integrity of the database
- establish and maintain coding productivity monitoring tools and records

Working Hours

- Medical coding specialists can work day, evening and night shifts.
- Medical coding specialists usually work 40 hours a week.
- Some work part time or weekends only.
- Some may be required to work overtime.

Income Potential

Hourly Wage		Annual Salary	
Entry:	\$13.47	Entry:	\$28,010
Midpoint:	\$17.34	Midpoint:	\$36,070
Experienced:	\$21.29	Experienced:	\$44,280

Education and Training

Medical coding specialists must have a high school diploma. Some college courses or an independent study course in medical coding is preferred. Coding specialists are advised to work in the field for two years before taking the CCS or CCS-P exam administered by the American Health Information Management Association. Both certifications represent mastery in clinical coding and must be maintained on an annual basis.

Medical Technologist — Kansas City

Job Definition

Medical technologists (M.T.) perform laboratory tests to assist physicians in the diagnosis and treatment of patients. Medical technologists supervise medical laboratory technicians. They may perform a wide range of tests in all areas of science or may choose to focus their skills in one area.

Life Skills

To be a medical technologist, you should:

- be reliable, responsible and dependable
- have patience and good communication skills
- be able to pay close attention to detail
- be able to work independently
- be comfortable in teaching and supervising roles
- have problem-solving skills
- have an interest in science and math
- possess time management and organizational skills
- have an interest in chemistry and microbiology
- have an interest in technological equipment and computers
- possess good motor skills and eye-hand coordination

Work Environment

Most medical technologists work in hospitals. Other settings include the following.

- academia
- blood and organ banks
- doctors' offices and clinics
- medical and diagnostic laboratories
- outpatient facilities and surgery centers
- research facilities

Tasks

- perform complex medical laboratory tests for diagnosis, treatment and prevention of disease
- operate, calibrate and maintain laboratory equipment
- troubleshoot laboratory equipment and operating errors
- use scientific rules and methods to solve problems
- develop, evaluate, revise and follow specific procedures and instructions
- compile and analyze detailed data, recognizing abnormalities and inconsistencies
- perform and evaluate quality control programs
- supervise clinical laboratory personnel
- examine and analyze fluids, tissues and cells
- communicate test results with medical staff
- inventory and order laboratory supplies

Working Hours

- Medical technologists can work days, evenings or nights.
- A shift is typically eight to 12 hours.
- Some work 36 hours in three days or 40 hours in four days and are off duty three to four days.
- Some work part time or weekends only.
- Some facilities require medical technologists to be on call.

Income Potential

Hourly Wage		Annual Salary	
Entry:	\$17.70	Entry:	\$36,808
Mean:	\$21.00	Mean:	\$43,675
Experienced:	\$22.65	Experienced:	\$47,108

Education and Training

Medical technologist programs are offered by colleges and universities, as well as hospitals. Some hospital programs require a bachelor's degree for entry while other hospital programs are affiliated with colleges and universities.

Pharmacist — Kansas City

Job Definition

Pharmacists are experts in the science of medicine and the art of medication therapy. A pharmacist's specific duties vary according to the place of practice. More than half of today's practicing pharmacists are community pharmacists who fill prescriptions, advise clients and other healthcare providers on treatment regimens, monitor patients' progress and manage the pharmacy business. Hospital pharmacists oversee drug distribution, educate medical staff on the uses and effects of medications, monitor patients' progress, manage and change therapies, as appropriate, and serve on committees related to drug therapy.

Life Skills

To be a pharmacist, you should:

- have compassion and a desire to help people
- have a caring, sympathetic nature
- be reliable, responsible and dependable
- have patience and good communication skills
- be able to work as part of a team
- be able to relate to patients and their families
- be able to pay close attention to detail
- be comfortable in teaching and supervising roles
- have problem-solving skills
- have an interest in science and math
- possess time management and delegation skills
- possess leadership and negotiation skills
- have integrity

Work Environment

Pharmacists typically work in a variety of settings, including the following.

- academia
- community-based pharmacies
- health insurance companies and pharmacy benefit management companies
- hospitals
- mail-order pharmacies
- marketing and sales positions
- nursing and personal care facilities
- other companies (pharmaceutical, medical technology, biotech and others)
- psychiatric and rehabilitation centers
- public health agencies
- regulatory agencies
- research facilities

Tasks

- review and dispense drugs prescribed by physicians and other health practitioners
- advise physicians and other health practitioners on medications, including dosages, interactions and side effects
- educate the public about prescription and over-the-counter medications and their uses
- advise patients about diet, exercise, health care supplies and medical devices
- assess, plan and monitor drug programs
- analyze drug therapy outcomes and patterns
- compound medications and infusion solutions
- develop and test new drugs and therapies
- manage business activities and operations, including hiring and supervising personnel
- supervise pharmacy technicians and other support personnel
- manage inventory of drugs, medical supplies and devices
- comply with all regulations by institution and government

Working Hours

- Pharmacists can work days, evenings or nights.
- Hours vary depending on the practice area.
- Some work part time or weekends only.

Income Potential

Hourly Wage		Annual Salary	
Entry:	\$29.81-36.06	Entry:	\$62,000-75,000
Midpoint:	\$36.54-41.35	Midpoint:	\$76,000-86,000
Experienced:	\$41.83-49.04	Experienced:	\$87,000-102,000

Education and Training

A license is required to practice pharmacy in all states and is achieved by graduating from an accredited educational program and passing state and national examinations (NABPLEX). The Pharm.D. (Doctor of Pharmacy) is the only degree program accredited by the American Council for Pharmacy Education. These programs require a minimum of six years of post-high school education. Some graduates choose postgraduate training through residency and/or fellowships.

Physical Therapist — Kansas City

Job Definition

Physical therapists work with people who have been physically disabled by illnesses or accidents or who are born with handicaps to restore their function, relieve pain or prevent disability. Treatments may include exercise to improve muscle strength and coordination; heat, cold, water or electricity applications to relieve pain or to change a patient's condition; therapeutic massages to relieve pain and reduce swelling; and wheelchairs or crutches to restore a patient's mobility.

Life Skills

To be a physical therapist, you should:

- have compassion and a desire to help people
- have a caring, sympathetic nature
- be reliable, responsible and dependable
- have patience and good communication skills
- be able to work as part of a team
- be able to relate to patients and their families
- be comfortable in teaching and supervising roles
- have problem-solving skills
- have an interest in science and math
- possess time management and delegation skills
- possess leadership and negotiation skills
- have an interest in the human body and the way it moves

Work Environment

Physical therapists work in a variety of settings, including the following.

- academia
- adult day-care programs
- doctors' offices and clinics
- home care, including private duty
- hospitals
- nursing and personal care facilities
- outpatient facilities and surgery centers
- private physical therapy clinics
- rehabilitation facilities
- research programs
- sports rehabilitation facilities

Tasks

- restore, maintain and promote overall fitness and health
- assist patients to restore function, improve mobility, relieve pain, increase strength and decrease or prevent deformity
- develop treatment strategies and outcomes
- examine patient medical histories and apply to plan of therapy
- administer manual exercises and therapeutic massages
- use electrical stimulation, ultrasound therapies and hot and cold packs
- teach patients exercises and basic therapies to do at home
- teach use of assistive devices, such as wheelchairs, braces, crutches and prostheses
- document patient progress and modify treatment plans accordingly
- communicate patients' status and issues with all team members, including physicians, nurses, nutritionists, social workers and respiratory therapists, among others
- manage business activities and operations, including hiring and supervising personnel

Working Hours

- Physical therapists typically work during the day; some may work evenings or nights.
- A shift is typically eight to 12 hours.
- Some work part time or weekends only.

Income Potential

Hourly Wage	Annual Salary
Entry: \$19.89	Entry: \$41,369
Mean: \$24.98	Mean: \$51,956
Experienced: \$27.52	Experienced: \$57,249

Education and Training

Employment in the field of physical therapy requires a master's or doctorate educational program accredited by the American Physical Therapy Association. All physical therapists also must be licensed by the state in which they choose to practice. These programs are very selective, and admission is competitive. Firsthand experience and high grades in the sciences will give an applicant the edge over the rest of the field. The trend is moving toward offering doctorate rather than master's programs in physical therapy.

Radiologic Technologist (a physician) taking specialized exams that use contrast media and radioactive. The radiographer is the primary caregiver in the radiology department and is the liaison between the patient and radiologist. Radiologic technologists may work in many different careers, including radiographer, radiation therapist, nuclear medicine technologist, and special procedures and/or interventional radiographer.

Life Skills

To be a radiologic technologist, you should:

- have compassion and a desire to help people
- have a caring, sympathetic nature
- be reliable, responsible and dependable
- have patience and good communication skills
- be able to work as part of a team
- be able to pay close attention to detail
- have problem-solving skills
- have an interest in science and math
- possess time management and organizational skills
- possess good motor skills and eye-hand coordination

Work Environment

Most radiologic technologists work in hospitals. Other settings include the following.

- diagnostic imaging centers
- doctors' offices and clinics
- information technology
- equipment manufacturing
- marketing and sales positions
- medical and diagnostic laboratories
- outpatient facilities and surgery centers

Tasks

- operate radiographic equipment, including X-ray machines, computers and other imaging devices such as magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and computed tomography (C.T.) scanners
- conform to radiation regulations and safety precautions
- prepare patients for procedures and explain procedure details
- assist in transporting and transferring patients
- monitor patients' conditions and reactions and report any abnormalities
- process and develop images for reading by physicians
- review and evaluate developed X-rays and videos
- adjust and maintain equipment and report any equipment problems
- communicate with other health professionals within radiology and other departments
- use safe practices in the administration of radiation in accordance with federal guidelines

Working Hours

- Radiologic technologists can work days, evenings or nights.
- A shift is typically eight to 12 hours.
- Some work 36 hours in three days or 40 hours in four days and are off duty three to four days.
- Some work part time or weekends only.
- Some facilities require radiologic technologists to be on call.

Income Potential

Hourly Wage		Annual Salary	
Entry:	\$17.31	Entry:	\$36,000
Mean:	\$20.19	Mean:	\$42,000
Experienced:	\$21.15	Experienced:	\$44,000

Education and Training

Radiologic technologist educational programs are offered at the two-year certificate, associate's degree and bachelor's degree levels. The American Registry of Radiologic Technologists offers a national exam for the ARRT certification for radiographers, the largest group of radiologic technologists, which is a requirement of most hospitals. Radiologic technologists may continue their education in advanced areas after completing the RT(R) exam.

Registered Nurse — Kansas City

Job Definition

Registered nurses (R.N.) care for patients and promote their physical, mental and social well-being. R.N.s use critical thinking skills to plan and implement nursing care, which includes monitoring patient status and progress, assisting physicians with care and rehabilitation, administering medication and advising patients and their families about preventive health care measures. The R.N. title encompasses various specialties. For R.N.s seeking advanced practice, there are opportunities to become a certified nurse-midwife (CNM), certified registered nurse anesthetist (CRNA), clinical nurse specialist (CNS) and nurse practitioner (N.P.).

Life Skills

To be a registered nurse, you should:

- have compassion and a desire to help people
- have a caring, sympathetic nature
- have patience and good communication skills
- be able to work as part of a team
- have physical and mental stamina
- be comfortable in teaching and supervising roles
- have an interest in science and math
- possess time management and delegation skills
- possess leadership and negotiation skills
- have keen observational and decision-making skills
- possess critical thinking skills and intellectual independence
- be willing to be accountable for overall patient care

Tasks

- assess the individual needs of patients and develop patient care plans accordingly
- evaluate patients' conditions, problems and deviations from normal standards
- communicate with and ensure participation from patient, family and significant others in the plan of care, using teaching and counseling techniques
- plan and communicate around-the-clock patient care with physicians and other members of the care team
- supervise nursing assistants, licensed practical nurses or a particular nursing unit
- manage patient discharges and rapid admissions
- manage and assimilate large sets of data, including laboratory and test results
- document patients' medical information and vital signs
- administer and monitor the effects of medications, including starting and maintaining IVs
- perform or assist in medical procedures, integrating new treatment modalities and new equipment
- participate in management activities, decision making and quality assurance
- maintain educational requirements and certifications

Work Environment

Most registered nurses work in hospitals. Others work in many other settings, including the following.

- academia
- community health clinics
- doctors' offices and clinics
- home care, including private duty
- hospice
- management and public relations
- nursing and personal care facilities
- outpatient facilities and surgery centers
- psychiatric and rehabilitation centers
- research facilities
- schools, community and occupational health settings

Working Hours

- Registered nurses can work days, evenings or nights.
- A shift is typically eight to 12 hours.
- Some work 36 hours in three days or 40 hours in four days and are off duty for three to four days.
- Some work part time or weekends only.
- Some facilities require R.N.s to be on call.

Income Potential

Hourly Wage		Annual Salary	
Entry:	\$18.11	Entry:	\$37,663
Mean:	\$23.36	Mean:	\$48,584
Experienced:	\$25.98	Experienced:	\$54,045
*Advanced Practice Nurse Salary Range: \$53,414 - \$82,306			

Education and Training

Becoming a licensed R.N. requires graduation from an accredited nursing program and the successful completion of a national licensing examination. There are three types of nursing education programs available for R.N.s. Associate degree programs, offered by community or junior colleges, last two years. Diploma programs are offered by hospitals and last two to three years, and bachelor's degree programs offered at colleges and universities last four to five years.

Respiratory Therapist — Kansas City

Job Definition

Registered respiratory therapists (RRT) and certified respiratory therapists (CRT) work under a physician's supervision to treat and care for patients with pulmonary disorders. Patients may suffer from chronic asthma or emphysema or may be victims of heart attack, stroke, shock or AIDS. Respiratory therapists care for premature infants with underdeveloped lungs, as well as for seniors who have increased susceptibility to pulmonary diseases. Recently, respiratory therapists have begun assuming the additional duties of cardiopulmonary technologists and may choose to specialize in other specific areas within the profession.

Life Skills

To be a respiratory therapist, you should:

- have compassion and a desire to help people
- have a caring nature
- have patience and good communication skills
- be able to work as part of a team
- be able to follow orders from supervisors and physicians
- have physical and mental stamina
- be able to relate to patients and their families
- be comfortable in teaching and supervising roles
- have an interest in science and math
- possess time management and organizational skills
- possess leadership and negotiation skills
- have keen observational and decision-making skills

Work Environment

Most respiratory therapists work in hospitals. Other settings include the following.

- consumer goods rental firms
- doctors' offices and clinics
- home care, including private duty
- nursing and personal care facilities
- rehabilitation facilities

Tasks

- evaluate patients' conditions, problems and deviations from normal related to breathing disorders
- communicate with and ensure participation from patients, families and significant others in the plan of care, using teaching techniques
- communicate patients' status and issues with all team members, including physicians, nurses, physical therapists, nutritionists and social workers
- supervise respiratory therapy technicians
- perform physical examinations
- document patients' medical information and vital signs
- administer oxygen mixtures, chest physiotherapy and aerosol medications
- use oxygen masks, cannulas and mechanical ventilation
- maintain tracheotomies and assist with airway access
- inspect, clean and test respiratory and ventilation equipment
- test patients' breathing capacity and arterial blood gases
- perform or assist in bedside or other clinical area procedures
- interpret tests and laboratory results
- maintain education requirements and certifications

Working Hours

- Respiratory therapists can work days, evenings or nights.
- A shift is typically eight to 12 hours.
- Some work 36 hours in three days or 40 hours in four days and are off duty three to four days.
- Some work part time or weekends only.

Income Potential

Hourly Wage		Annual Salary	
Entry:	\$15.15	Entry:	\$31,508
Mean:	\$18.80	Mean:	\$39,101
Experienced:	\$20.62	Experienced:	\$42,897

Education and Training

All entry-level respiratory therapists must complete a formal training program. Community colleges offer two-year programs and award an associate's degree while four-year colleges and universities award a bachelor's degree. This education is sufficient to take the exam to become a CRT. Students seeking RRT certification must pass two more exams.